

2007

Plenary Poetry: Read Individually and in Symphony & Blasphemy & Doubt

Per Darmer

Louise Grisoni

Jane James

Beatrice Rossi Bouchrara

Steve Taylor

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James

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AVANT GARDE ORGANIZATION

Vickery

AESTHESIS//CREATE

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PLENARY POETRY

READ INDIVIDUALLY AND IN SYMPHONY

*Per Darmer, Louise Grisoni,
Jane James & Beatrice
Rossi Bouchrara*

Introduction

The poems you are about to read were part of a plenary presentation at the third Art of Management and Organization conference in Krakow, Poland, September 2006. The plenary presentation: *Poetry Play – The Business Way and Away* was performed on the opening night of the Krakow conference.

The lights were low, the spirits high, the anxiety lingered in the air, the necessary nervousness was there, and all was set -- except that the setting in the auditorium, where the play was to be performed, was not the ideal stage for the presentation. The seating arrangements of the setting were fixed, which made it impossible to stick to the original idea of the play: slowly turning a board meeting (business) into a lyric café (poetry) to illustrate a movement from management to art underlined by continuously making the language of the play more and more poetic. Simultaneously, images from the art world and business world were projected onto a screen to underline the blurring of this artificial distinction of art and management. The play was to show the poetics of a board meeting and the organizing of a lyric café to integrate art and management in the movement. The images were flashing onto the screen in random order to bring another layer of stimulation and possibility for the audience to connect and create meaning.

In exchange for a 'real' lyric café, the presenters of the play spread out in the auditorium and read their poetry from different positions in the room. In doing so they followed the idea of the lyric café to some extent

by starting out traditionally reading their poetry individually.

Each took their turn from their position in the room

each read their piece of poetry in their own voice and rhythm.

The presenters did so continuously, reading eight poems in a row, to create and withhold a certain flow.

The reading of the eight poems individually (with four different voices from four different positions) was followed by a multi-vocal poetry symphony, all four starting simultaneously, filling the room from positions with different voices and variation in rhythm, contents and length.

Voices fading gradually

As the poems finish infrequently

Until the multi-vocal choir

Slowly dies and silence roars

**THE EIGHT POEMS READ
INDIVIDUALLY BY THE FOUR
PRESENTERS IN THE SAME ORDER AS
THEY ARE PRESENTED.**

HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Per Darmer

Humans are resources to be managed
Humans seen as resources
Humans transformed into resources
Humans being resources

What about
The human side of the enterprise
The human side of HRM
The human in HRM

Frightening to realise
The place of the human in HRM
The view of the human in HRM
The view of human nature in HRM

Revolting to think about
What view of human nature lies beneath:
The employee is our most valuable resource
HR as strategic partner
Matching the environment
Matching task
Matching capabilities
Developing competencies
Developing HR

At least to me
HR lacks humanity

When HRM went in
The human went out
Does anyone know
Where did it go?

Maybe it just went
Into Management.

OPENING THE DOORS OF THE CLOSED HOTEL

Louise Grisoni

Conception of an idea
Germination at the point of entry
It begins – we begin – together
Opening the doors of the closed hotel.

Agree: disagree
With passion, pride and energy
Poetry for Management
Management for Poetry
Poetry of Management
Management of Poetry
Word play, powerful verbal weaponry
Who will be shocked?
Slam the doors shut quick!

More slowly now, cautiously curious
Peek inside: outside
What's possible here that we can't do there?
Open the doors of the closed hotel.



1989 HOLD ON TO ME: A VAGUELY RAPPING SONG

Jane James

Hold on to me
I am moving away
Keep sight of me
Say what you want to say

I am different and the changes deep inside
Are important, there's a turning of the tide
A mid-life crisis had changed my whole approach
What I want now I must reach right out and touch.

So hold on to me
I am moving away
Keep sight of me
Say what you want to say

Together, we built our nest and made
A home life, children cannot be betrayed
We adjusted to each other's whims and wishes
Communication meant agreement on the issues

But hold on to me
I am moving away
Keep sight of me
Say what you want to say

Assertiveness, means I have found a path
Finding yourself is never just a laugh
But I'm myself and now certain of one thing
You can be with me; you have given me a ring

So hold on to me
I am moving away
Keep sight of me
Say what you want to say

Adjustment, need not only be one way
Even women can work and rest and play
We're earthbound, but there are light years to explore
Alone I'll do it, but with you the pleasure's more

So hold on to me
I am moving away
Keep sight of me
Say what you want to say

SOUS LE BLEU EXEMPLAIRE

Beatrice Rossi Bouchrara

se risquent les nomades
nombreux et téméraires
combien de vies muettes
s'installent à jamais
et cherchent sur nos mains
des icônes de nuit

Under the exemplary blue
the many adventurous nomads
how many muted lives
stay forever in one place
and search our hands
for the night's icons

Et leurs filets de sel
posés sur les silences
fleurissent les déserts
de reflets incertains

And their nets of salt
laden with silence
blossoming deserts
with uncertain hues

AWAY DAY*

Loiuse Grisoni

Here we go, 'ere we go, ear wig oh!
Begin the beguine
Dance and sway
Away Day today.

Say what you want to say
Hear what you want to hear.
Can you hear me? (mother).
Did anyone hear me?

Is there anyone there?
Is everyone here?
Where are you?
Missing.

Heads: I win.
What?
Puppy dog – tails: you lose.
What?
Puppy dog tails – snip!

Sugar and spice.
Sacrifice
Three little mice
Roast them twice – nice.

Oops a daisy, trip the light fantastic
You're in, you're out, shake it all about.
Hokey cokey, jiggery pokery.
All fall down.

Meet and pull apart
Two veggies please
Hurray, cliché, touché
Away the lads, away day today!

* Previously published in *Management Decision* special edition 'Poeme'. Vol 44 no4

TAME FLOW

Per Darmer

Captured by nature
In all its splendor
Simplicity
Roughness
Sophistication
Beauty
Variation
Selection
Retention
Enactment
Enact with man
Man and nature
Uneasy symbiosis
Forces of fight
Control unpredictability
Stabilise dynamics
Tame the wild
Tame the beast
Tame relation
Into tame relations
Moving beyond moving
Moving to move
Moving all to stay the tame
Moving all to tame the flow
Moving the flow
Floating with the flow
Moving mind and memory
Making mind and memory flow
Floating with mind and memory

REFLEXIVE CONSULTANCY

Jane James

Getting there, travel companions,
Navigation; destination.
Motorway speed or motorway hold up.
Country road uncertainty – and slow moving traffic.
Maps, signposts, landmarks.
Alternate driving or passenger seat place
Occasional chewing gum
Discussion about families.
Holiday plans and experiences.
Week-end events and domestic challenges.
Humour, TV, plays and politics.
Companionship
Friends

Colleagues
And the work
The task
The consultancy
The action learning
How will they be?
What is the time plan?
Anything we must remember?
Are we looking forward to it?
We know we like doing it together.

Aha! Done it again – fallen into the innuendo trap
They set us
For fun
To liven the day.
To avoid their own
Emotions perhaps.
These are not for work
Not for action learning sets -
Might get in the way

Of looking like a proper local government
Officer.

SANS ÉPAISSEUR CETTE NUIT

Beatrice Rossi

où les nomades lissent
innombrables
les pierres polies de silence

Ever so lightly this night
where countless nomads
gently brush
the stones worn with silence



POETRY SYMPHONY

THE FOUR POEMS READ IN
SYMPHONY (SIMULTANEOUSLY)
BY THE FOUR PRESENTERS.

TO BE CONTINUED...

Louise Grisoni

Imagine the possibilities
Creative processes for creative products
Synchronicity, harmony and consistency.
The best organization run in the best way in the best of all possible worlds.
Panglossian pride!

Only a dream?
Rhetoric and reality squeeze themselves apart like magnetic poles
Similarities repelling connection.
Seek opposites
And then...?

WAVE THE THOUGHT

Per Darmer

Waves of thought
Smashed at seashore
Washed out
Forever
Forever
They come
In rhythm with the ocean
In my weird weary head
Exploding brain cells
Creating thought waves
Blowing away the mind
Minding the mind
Never mind

ART OF MANAGEMENT TWO PARIS 2004

Jane James

Zen man
Grey uniform
Made from black and white
Difference and resonance
Contrast and merger

Orange French woman
Poet but nothing rhymes with her
colour
Desert connection
Dancing in the sand

Lost faces
Lost locations
They cannot find us
We are lost but find ourselves the
more surely
The stream is so well hidden
Only the intrepid
Drink from its
Liquid possibilities

Plasticine five bar gate
Waiting to be pushed open
I am on the edge and the heart
Might be aroused

DEBOUT SUR LES DÉSERTS

Beartice Rossi

ils fauchent les racines
bernent et bercent
et hissent les pavots de leurs légers
radeaux
amarrés lentement
aux couleurs du sable

standing on the deserts
they plough the roots
and rock
and raise the flags
of their light rafts
slowly anchored
to the colors of the sand

Blasphemy & Doubt © 2007

Interview with Steve Taylor

Steve, we are fortunate to be able to publish your play *Blasphemy & Doubt*. Can you explain the journey that has led to you become both an academic and a playwright?

I took my first class in playwriting in 1978 from A. R. Gurney, Jr. That led to me eventually giving up on aeronautical engineering and graduating with a B.S. in playwriting from M.I.T., which in some way says it all. Then I was an USAF Officer for a while, doing project management by day and community theater by night. I left the Air Force and worked in the software industry for a few years before going back to school and getting my M.A. in performing arts from Emerson. A couple more years in spent working in the software industry and then I came back to school for a PhD. There was much better funding in management than there was in theater, so I went to Boston College where the focus was on organizational transformation. Then my first academic job was at the University of Bath in the UK, and now I'm at W.P.I.

You've obviously had an interesting and varied career so far. Have these wide-ranging personal experiences become intrinsic to your your work in some way?

My best writing comes directly from my personal experiences. My play, *Soft Targets* emerged from my experience of being laid off from a software company. *Capitalist Pigs* was my attempt to make sense of the first two years of my doctoral program. *Ties That Bind* came from an series of encounters at a CMS conference, when I was blown away by how nasty academics could be to each other – especially when they had so much in common.

Why, of all the arts, have you chosen to work in theatre?

I wrote short stories and poetry when I was younger. I've done some short videos and written a couple of screenplays. I've acted a little and done a couple of solo performance pieces. My wife and I made mobiles for a while, though not so much lately. But writing plays seems to be the thing that I come back to. I don't think it's really something I have chosen, but much more something that has chosen me.

What motivates you to write, and who or what influences you or inspires you in your writing?

I have a great love of Beckett's work. The complexity and intellectual depth of Stoppard and the language of Pinter are huge influences. But my motivation is really about changing things. In that sense Fugard and Havel are my heroes because their work played an important part in significant societal change. Writing any script alone is a taxing process, let alone bringing a show to fruition. So what do you feel are your biggest challenges in bringing organizational issues to the stage?

Plays show us the action of individuals. It's hard to bring issues of culture and systems to the stage. It's easy to show a person being subjugated. It's hard to show a system of subjugation in which those doing the subjugation are just as trapped in the system. Of course those who are so inclined would see the system in the individual portrayal, but how do you present it in way that those who aren't so inclined recognise the system? So for me the challenge is bringing organizational issues to the stage rather than just individual issues that occur within an organizational context.

You have written/directed a number of plays about organizational issues. How do you consider this body of work has evolved?

I don't think I'm the best judge of my own work, but that aside, the main way that the work has evolved is in how the plays resolve. The earlier pieces such as *Soft Targets* (Art of Management and Organization Conference, London) and *Ties That Bind* (Art of Management and Organization Conference, Paris) reach resolution with the antagonist finding a happy place within the existing systems. I'm now more interested in finding ways for the antagonist to find ways to change the existing system. *Blasphemy & Doubt* is somewhere in between as it's not clear that the existing system has really changed at the end, but neither has Robin simply found a place within the system. I'd like to be writing plays about changing the system in a way that is believable, but that would mean that I really understand how to change the system. And I don't think I know how to do that. Yet. Maybe I never will.

Tell us a little about the development and implications of *Blasphemy & Doubt* itself.

I started with a couple of intellectual ideas. The first was the idea of leading change in a completely socially constructed environment. By setting the play in the afterlife, I could really play with the idea of social construction. The second idea was adult developmental theory and I tried to have Robin, the antagonist, evolve through different stages of adult development and try different ways of leading or creating change based on the various action logics of the developmental stages. So in that sense, the play is about getting to a post-conventional developmental stage. And of course, any play needs a visceral emotional reality to support all that intellectual scaffolding, so I came up with a story of someone who feels like they have been wronged. I mean how would you feel if you woke up dead and in hell? I think most of us (if we believe at all) don't think we're going to hell. So, I wanted to work with the reality of that story as well. And of course, I was hoping to move towards that idea of how to change the system – and even though I don't really know how to do it, I do think that doubt is important. And blasphemy. Every system needs to be blasphemed against from time to time.

Steve, thanks for these insights into your work, I am sure you have whetted the appetites of our readers for *Blasphemy & Doubt*.....

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Blasphemy & Doubt

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Steve Taylor

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